

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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WILLING TO DIE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE ROSE AND THE KEY."

TO THE READER.

FIRST, I must tell you how I intend to relate my story. Having never before undertaken to write a long narrative, I have considered and laid down a few rules which I shall observe. Some of these are unquestionably good; others, I dare say, offend against the canons of composition; but I adopt them, because they will enable me to tell my story better than, with my imperfect experience, better rules possibly would. In the first place, I shall represent the people with whom I had to deal quite fairly. I have met some bad people, some indifferent, and some who at this distance of time seem to me like angels in the unchanging light of heaven.

My narrative shall be arranged in the order of the events; I shall not recapitulate or anticipate.

What I have learned from others, and did not witness, that which I narrate, in part, from the hints of living witnesses, and, in part, conjecturally, I shall record in the historic third person; and I shall write it down with as much confidence and particularity as if I had actually seen it; in that respect imitating, I believe, all great historians, modern and ancient. But the scenes in which I have been an actor, that which my eyes have seen, and my ears heard, I will relate accordingly. If I can be clear and true, my clumsiness and irregularity, I hope, will be forgiven me.

My name is Ethel Ware.

I am not an interesting person by any means. You shall judge. I shall be forty-two my next birthday. That anniversary

will occur on the first of May, 1873; and I am unmarried.

I don't look quite the old maid I am, they tell me. They say I don't look five-and-thirty, and I am conscious, sitting before the glass, that there is nothing sour or peevish in my features. What does it matter, even to me? I shall, of course, never marry; and, honestly, I don't care to please any one. If I cared twopence how I looked, I should probably look worse than I do.

I wish to be honest. I have looked in the glass since I wrote that sentence. I have just seen the faded picture of what may have been a pretty, at least what is called a piquant face; a forehead broad and well-formed, over which the still dark-brown hair grows low; large and rather good grey eyes and features, with nothing tragic, nothing classic—just fairly good.

I think there was always energy in my face; I think I remember, long ago, something at times comic; at times, also, something sad and tender, and even dreamy, as I fixed flowers in my hair or talked to my image in the glass. All that has been knocked out of me, pretty well. What I do see there now, is resolution.

There are processes of artificial hatching in use, if I remember rightly, in Egypt, by which you may, at your discretion, make the bird all beak, or all claw, all head, or all drumstick, as you please to develop it, before the shell breaks, by a special application of heat. It is a chick, no doubt, but a monstrous chick; and something like such a chick was I. Circumstances, in my very early days, hatched my character altogether out of equilibrium.

The caloric had been applied quite differently in my mother's case, and produced a prodigy of quite another sort.

I loved my mother with a very warm, but, I am now conscious, with a somewhat contemptuous affection. It never was an angry nor an arrogant contempt; a very tender one, on the contrary. She loved me, I am sure, as well as she was capable of loving a child—better than she ever loved my sister—and I would have laid down my life for her; but, with all my love, I looked down upon her, although I did not know it, till I thought my life over in the melancholy honesty of solitude.

I am not romantic. If I ever was it is time I should be cured of all that. I can laugh heartily, but I think I sigh more than most people.

I am not a bit shy, but I like solitude; partly because I regard my kind with not unjust suspicion.

I am speaking very frankly. I enjoy, perhaps you think cynically, this hard-featured self-delineation. I don't spare myself; I need not spare any one else. But I am not a cynic. There is vacillation and timidity in that ironical egotism. It is something deeper with me. I don't delight in that sordid philosophy. I have encountered magnanimity and self-devotion on earth. It is not true that there is neither nobility nor beauty in human nature, that is not also more or less shabby and grotesque.

I have an odd story to tell. On my father's side I am the grand-daughter of a viscount; on my mother's, the grand-daughter of a baronet. I have had my early glimpses of the great world, and a wondrous long stare round the dark world beneath it.

When I lower my hand, and in one of the momentary reveries that tempt a desultory writer tickle my cheek slowly with the feathered end of my pen—for I don't incise my sentences with a point of steel, but, in the old fashion, wing my words with a possibly too appropriate grey-goose plume—I look through a tall window in an old house on the scenery I have loved best and earliest in the world. The noble Welsh mountains are on my right; the purple headlands, stooping grandly into the waves; I look upon the sea, the enchanted element, my first love and my last! How often I lean upon my hand and smile back upon the waters that silently smile on me, rejoicing under the summer heavens; and in wintry moonlights, when the north wind drives the awful waves upon the rocks, and I see the foam shooting cloud after cloud into the air, I have found myself, after long hours, still gazing, as if my breath were frozen, on the one peaked

black rock, thinking what the storm and foam once gave me up there, until, with a sudden terror, and a gasp, I wake from the spell, and recoil from the white image, as if a spirit had been talking with me all the time.

From this same window, in the foreground, I see, in morning light or melancholy sunset, with very perfect and friendly trust, the shadowy old churchyard, where I have arranged my narrow bed shall be. There my mother-earth, at last, shall hold me in her bosom, and I shall find my anodyne and rest. There over me shall hover through the old church windows faintly the sweet hymns and the voices in prayer I heard long ago; there the shadow of tower and tree shall slowly move over the grass above me, from dawn till night, and there, within the fresh and solemn sound of its waves, I shall lie near the ceaseless fall and flow of the sea I loved so well.

I am not sorry, as I sit here, with my vain recollections and my direful knowledge, that my life has been what it was.

A member of the upper ten thousand, I should have known nothing. I have bought my knowledge dear. But truth is a priceless jewel. Would you part with it, fellow-mourner, and return to the simplicities and illusions of early days? Consider the question truly; be honest; and you will answer "no." In the volume of Memory, every page of which, like "Cornelius Agrippa's bloody book," has power to evoke a spectre, would you yet erase a line? We can willingly part with nothing that ever was part of mind, or memory, or self. The lamentable past is our own for ever.

Thank Heaven, my childhood was passed in a tranquil nook, where the roar of the world's traffic is not so much as heard; among scenery, where there lurks little capital, and no enterprise; where the good people are asleep; and where, therefore, the irreparable improvements, that in other places carry on their pitiless work of obliteration, are undreamed of. I am looking out on scenes that remain unchanged as heaven itself. The summer comes and goes; the autumn drifts of leaves, and winter snows; and all things, here, remain as my round childish eyes beheld them in stupid wonder and delight when first the world was opening upon them. The trees, the tower, the stile, the very gravestones, are my earliest friends; I stretch my arms to the mountains, as if I could fold them to my heart. And in

the opening through the ancient trees, the great estuary stretches northward, wider and wider, into the grey horizon of the open sea.

The sinking sun askanee,
Spreads a dull glare,
Through evening air;
And, in a happy trance,
Forest and wave, and white cliff stand,
Like an enchanted sea and land.
The sea-breeze wakens clear and cold,
Over the azure wide;
Before whose breath, in threads of gold,
The ruddy ripples glide,
And chasing, break and mingle;
While clear as bells,
Each wavelet tells,
O'er the stones on the hollow shingle.
The rising of winds and the fall of the waves!
I love the music of shingle and caves,
And the billows that travel so far to die,
In foam, on the loved shore where they lie.
I lean my cold cheek on my hand;
And as a child, with open eyes,
Listens in a dim surprise,
To some high story
Of grief and glory,
I cannot understand;
So, like that child,
To meanings of a music wild,
I listen, in a rapture lonely,
Not understanding, listening only,
To a story not for me;
And let my fancies come and go,
And fall and flow,
With the eternal sea.

And so, to leave rhyme, and return to prose, I end my preface, and begin my story here.

CHAPTER I. AN ARRIVAL.

ONE of the earliest scenes I can remember with perfect distinctness, is this. My sister and I, still denizens of the nursery, had come down to take our tea with good old Rebecca Torkill, the Malory housekeeper, in the room we called the cedar parlour. It is a long and rather sombre room, with two tall windows looking out upon the shadowy court-yard. There are 'on the wall some dingy portraits, whose pale faces peep out, as it were, through a background of black fog, from the canvas; and there is one, in better order than the others, of a grave man in the stately costume of James the First, which hangs over the mantel-piece. As a child I loved this room; I loved the half-decipherable pictures; it was solemn and even gloomy, but it was with the delightful gloom and solemnity of one of Rebecca Torkill's stories of castles, giants, and goblins.

It was evening now, with a stormy, red sky in the west. Rebecca and we two children were seated round the table, sipping our tea, eating hot cake, and listening to her oft-told tale, entitled the Knight of the Black Castle.

This knight, habited in black, lived in

his black castle, in the centre of a dark wood, and being a giant, and an ogre, and something of a magician beside, he used to ride out at nightfall with a couple of great black bags, to stow his prey in, at his saddle-bow, for the purpose of visiting such houses as had their nurseries well stocked with children. His tall black horse, when he dismounted, waited at the hall-door, which, however mighty its bars and bolts, could not resist certain magical words which he uttered in a sepulchral voice,

"Yoke, yoke,
Iron and oak;
One, two, and three,
Open to me."

At this charmed summons the door turned instantly on its hinges, without warning of creak or rattle, and the black knight mounted the stairs to the nursery, and was drawing the children softly out of their beds, by the feet, before any one knew he was near.

As this story, which with childish love of iteration we were listening to now for the fiftieth time, went on, I, whose chair faced the window, saw a tall man on a tall horse—both looked black enough against the red sky—ride by at a walk.

I thought it was the gaunt old vicar, who used to ride up now and then to visit our gardener's mother, who was sick and weak, and troubling my head no more about him, was instantly as much absorbed as ever in the predatory prowlings of the Knight of the Black Castle.

It was not until I saw Rebecca's face, in which I was staring with the steadiness of an eager interest, undergo a sudden and uncomfortable change, that I discovered my error. She stopped in the middle of a sentence, and her eyes were fixed on the door. Mine followed hers thither. I was more than startled. In the very crisis of a tale of terror, ready to believe any horror, I thought, for a moment, that I actually beheld the black knight, and felt that his horse, no doubt, and his saddle-bags, were waiting at the hall-door to receive me and my sister.

What I did see was a man who looked to me gigantic. He seemed to fill the tall door-case. His dress was dark, and he had a pair of leather overalls, I believe they called them, which had very much the effect of jack-boots, and he had a low-crowned hat on. His hair was long and black, his prominent black eyes were fixed on us, his face was long, but handsome, and deadly pale, as it seemed to me, from intense anger. A child's instinctive read-

ing of countenance is seldom at fault. The ideas of power and mystery surround grown persons in the eyes of children. A gloomy or forbidding face upon a person of great stature inspires something like panic; and if that person be a stranger, and evidently transported with anger, his mere appearance in the same room will, I can answer for it, frighten a child half into hysterics. This alarming face, with its black knit brows, and very blue shorn chin, was to me all the more fearful that it was that of a man no longer young. He advanced to the table, with two strides, and said, in resonant, deep tones, to which my very heart seemed to vibrate:

"Mr. Ware's not here; but he will be, soon enough; you give him that;" and he hammered down a letter on the table, with a thump of his huge fist. "That's my answer; and tell him, moreover, that I took his letter;" and he plucked an open letter deliberately from his great-coat pocket, "and tore it, this way and that way, across and across," and he suited the action fiercely to the words, "and left it for him, there!"

So saying, he slapped down the pieces with his big hand, and made our tea-spoons jump and jingle in our cups, and turned and strode again to the door.

"And tell him this," he added, in a tone of calmer hatred, turning his awful face on us again, "that there's a God above us, who judges righteously."

The door shut, and we saw him no more; and I and my sister burst into clamorous tears, and roared and cried for a full half-hour, from sheer fright, a demonstration which, for a time, gave Rebecca Torkill ample occupation for all her energies and adroitness.

This recollection remains, with all the colouring and exaggeration of a horrible impression, received in childhood, fixed in my imagination. I and dear Nelly long remembered the apparition, and in our plays used to call him, after the goblin hero of the romance to which we had been listening when he entered, the Knight of the Black Castle.

The adventure made, indeed, a profound impression upon our nerves, and I have related it, with more detail than it seems to deserve, because it was in truth connected with my story; and I afterwards, unexpectedly, saw a good deal more of the awful man, in whose presence my heart had quaked, and after whose visit I and my sister seemed for days to have drank of "the cup of trembling."

I must take up my story now at a point a great many years later.

Let the reader fancy me and my sister Helen; I, dark-haired, and a few months past sixteen, she, with flaxen, or rather golden hair, and large blue eyes, and only fifteen, standing in the hall at Malory, lighted with two candles; one in the old-fashioned glass bell that swings by three chains from the ceiling, the other carried out hastily from the housekeeper's room, and flaming on the table, in the foggy puffs of the February night air that entered at the wide-open hall-door.

Old Rebecca Torkill stood on the steps, with her broad hand shading her eyes, as if the moon dazzled them.

"There's nothing, dear; no, Miss Helen, it mustn't a' bin the gate. There's no sign o' nothin' comin' up, and no sound nor nothing at all; come in, dear; you shouldn't a' come out to the open door, with your cough, in this fog."

So in she stumped, and shut the door; and we saw no more of the dark trunks and boughs of the elms at the other side of the court-yard, with the smoky mist between: and we three trooped together to the housekeeper's room, where we had taken up our temporary quarters.

This was the second false alarm that night, sounded, in Helen's fancy, by the quivering scream of the old iron gate. We had to wait and watch in the fever of expectation for some time longer.

Our old house of Malory was, at the best, in the forlorn condition of a ship of war out of commission. Old Rebecca and two rustic maids, and Thomas Jones, who was boots, gardener, hen-wife, and farmer, were all the hands we could boast; and at least three-fourths of the rooms were locked up, with shutters closed; and many of them, from year to year, never saw the light, and lay in perennial dust.

The truth is, my father and mother seldom visited Malory. They had a house in London, and led a very gay life; were very "good people," immensely in request, and everywhere. Their rural life was not at Malory, but spent in making visits at one country-house after another. Helen and I, their only children, saw very little of them. We sometimes were summoned up to town for a month or two for lessons in dancing, music, and other things, but there we saw little more of them than at home. The being in society, judging by its effects upon them, appeared to me a very harassing and laborious profession. I always felt that we were half in the way and half

out of sight in town, and was immensely relieved when we were dismissed again to our holland frocks, and to the beloved solitudes of Malory.

This was a momentous night. We were expecting the arrival of a new governess, or rather companion.

Laura Grey—we knew no more than her name, for in his hurried note we could not read whether she was Miss or Mrs.—my father had told us was to arrive this night at about nine o'clock. I had asked him, when he paid his last visit of a day here, and announced the coming event, whether she was a married lady. To which he answered, laughing, "You wise little woman! That's a very pertinent question, though I never thought of it, and I have been addressing her as Miss Grey all this time. She certainly is old enough to be married."

"Is she cross, papa, I wonder?" I further inquired.

"Not cross; perhaps a little severe. 'She whipped two female 'prentices to death, and hid them in the coal-hole,' or something of that kind, but she has a very cool temper;" and so he amused himself with my curiosity.

Now, although we knew that all this, including the quotation, was spoken in jest, it left an uncomfortable suspicion. Was this woman old and ill-tempered? A great deal was in the power of a governess here. An artful woman, who liked power, and did not like us, might make us very miserable.

At length the little party in the housekeeper's room did hear sounds at which we all started up with one consent. They were the trot of a horse's hoofs and the roll of wheels, and before we reached the hall-door the bell was ringing.

Rebecca swung open the door, and we saw in the shadow of the house, with the wheels touching the steps, a one-horse conveyance, with some luggage on top, dimly lighted by the candles in the hall.

A little bonnet was turned toward us from the windows; we could not see what the face was like; a slender hand turned the handle, and a lady, whose figure, though enveloped in a tweed cloak, looked very slight and pretty, came down, and ran up the steps, and hesitated, and being greeted encouragingly by Rebecca Torkill, entered the hall smiling, and showed a very pretty and modest face, rather pale, and very young.

"My name is Grey; I am the new governess," she said, in a pleasant voice, which, with her pretty looks, was very en-

gaging; "and these are the young ladies?" she continued, glancing at Rebecca and back again to us; "you are Ethel, and you Helen Ware?" and a little timidly she offered her hand to each.

I liked her already.

"Shall I go with you to your room," I asked, "while Rebecca is making tea for us in the housekeeper's room? We thought we should be more comfortable there to-night."

"I'm so glad; I shall feel quite at home: it is the very thing I should have liked," she said; and talked on as I led her to her room, which, though very old-fashioned, looked extremely cosy, with a good fire flickering abroad and above on walls and ceiling.

I remember everything about that evening so well. I have reason to remember Miss Laura Grey.

Some people would have said that there was not a regular feature in her face, except her eyes, which were very fine; but she had beautiful little teeth, and a skin wonderfully smooth and clear, and there was refinement and energy in her face, which was pale and spiritual, and indescribably engaging. To my mind, whether according to rule or not, she was nothing short of beautiful.

I have reason to remember that pale, pretty, young face. The picture is clear and living before me this moment, as it was then in the firelight. Standing there, she smiled on me very kindly—she looked as if she would have kissed me—and then, suddenly thoughtful, she stretched her slender hands to the fire, and, in a momentary reverie, sighed very deeply.

I left her, softly, with her trunks and boxes, which Thomas Jones had already carried up, and ran down-stairs.

I remember the pictures of that night with supernatural distinctness; for at that point of time fate changed my life, and with pretty Miss Grey another pale figure entered, draped in black, and calamity was my mate for many a day after.

Our tea-party, however, this night in Mrs. Torkill's room, was very happy. I don't remember what we talked about, but we were in high good humour with our young lady superioress, and she seemed to like us.

I am going to tell you very shortly my impressions of this lady. I never met any one in my life who had the same influence over me; and, for a time, it puzzled me.

When we were not at French, German, music—our studies, in fact—she was

exactly like one of ourselves, always ready to do whatever we liked best, always pleasant, gentle, and, in her way, even merry.

When she was alone, or thinking, she was sad. That seemed the habit of her mind; but she was naturally gay and sympathetic, as ready as we for a walk on the strand to pick up shells, for a ride on the donkeys to Penruthyn Priory, to take a sail or a row on the estuary, or a drive in our little pony-carriage anywhere. Sometimes on our rambles we would cross the stile and go into the pretty little churchyard that lies to the left of Malory, near the sea, and if it were a sunny day we would read the old inscriptions and loiter away half an hour among the tombstones.

And when we came home to tea we would sit round the fire and tell stories, of which she had ever so many, German, French, Scotch, Irish, Icelandic, and I know not what; and sometimes we went to the housekeeper's room, and, with Rebecca Torkill's leave, made a hot cake, and baked it ourselves on the griddle there, with great delight.

The secret of Laura Grey's power was in her gentle temper, her inflexible conscience, and her angelic firmness in all matters of duty. I never saw her excited, or for a moment impatient; and at idle times, as I said, she was one of ourselves. The only threat she ever used was to tell us that she could not stay at Malory as our governess if we would not do what she thought right. There is in young people an instinctive perception of motive, and no truer spirit than Laura Grey ever lived on earth. I loved her. I had no fear of her. She was our gentle companion and playmate; and yet, in a certain sense, I never stood so much in awe of any human being.

Only a few days after Laura Grey had come home, we were sitting in our accustomed room, which was stately, but not uncomfortably spacious, and, like many at the same side of the house, panelled up to ceiling. I remember, it was just at the hour of the still early sunset, and the ruddy beams were streaming their last through the trunks of the great elms. We were in high chat over Helen's little sparrow, Dickie, a wonderful bird, whose appetite and spirits we were always discussing, when the door opened, and Rebecca said, "Young ladies, please, here's Mr. Carmel;" and Miss Grey, for the first time, saw a certain person who turns up at intervals and in odd scenes in the course of this autobiography.

The door is at some distance from the window, and through its panes across that space upon the opposite wall the glow of sunset fell mistily, making the clear shadow, in which our visitor stood, deeper. The figure stood out against this background like a pale old portrait, his black dress almost blended with the background; but, indistinct as it was, it was easy to see that the dress he wore was of some ecclesiastical fashion not in use among Church of England men. The coat came down a good deal lower than his knees. His thin slight figure gave him an effect of height far greater than his real stature; his fine forehead showed very white in contrast with his close dark hair, and his thin delicate features, as he stepped slowly in, with an ascetic smile, and his hand extended, accorded well with ideas of abstinence and penance. Gentle as was his manner, there was something of authority also in it, and in the tones of his voice.

"How do you do, Miss Ethel? How do you do, Miss Helen? I am going to write my weekly note to your mamma, and—oh! Miss Grey, I believe?"—he interrupted himself, and bowed rather low to the young governess, disclosing the small tonsure on the top of his head.

Miss Grey acknowledged his bow, but I could see that she was puzzled and surprised.

"I am to tell your mamma, I hope, that you are both quite well?" he said, addressing himself to me, and taking my hand; "and in good spirits, I suppose, Miss Grey?" he said, apparently recollecting that she was to be recognised; "I may say that?"

He turned to her, still holding my hand.

"Yes, they are quite well, and, I believe, happy," she said, still looking at him, I could see, with curiosity.

It was a remarkable countenance, with large earnest eyes, and a mouth small and melancholy, with those brilliant red lips that people associate with early decay. It was a pale face of suffering and decision, which so vaguely indicated his years that he might be any age you pleased, from six-and-twenty up to six-and-thirty, as you allowed more or less in the account for the afflictions of a mental and bodily discipline.

He stood there for a little while chatting with us. There was something engaging in this man, cold, severe, and melancholy as his manner was. I was conscious that he was agreeable, and young as I was, I felt that he was a man of unusual learning and ability.

In a little time he left us. It was now twilight, and we saw him, with his slight stoop, pass our window with slow step and downcast eyes.

BOUGHT AND SOLD.

BUYING and selling—ancient and legitimate process though it be—can never, perhaps, be reduced to conditions of perfect equity. Pity 'tis, 'tis true; but the truth remains intact. The leopard of commerce must change his spots, and the Ethiopian of trade his skin, before we can be certain of a sure pennyworth for a safe penny. After all, existence is to nineteen-twentieths of us a struggle to keep alive, and it is the instinct of self-preservation that turns every market into a wordy battle-field, every bargain into a bloodless duel. To buy cheap and to sell dear constitutes, no doubt, the golden rule of economists, but each clause of the double-barrelled precept clashes inevitably with the wishes and interests of those with whom we deal. Most people, as a matter of argument, concede that a thing is worth what it will fetch, and so it is, but to discover that unknown quantity is the practical problem.

The world, in its onward rush, has got beyond Autolycus. That poor old rogue, trudging along the dusty road, with pack and ell-wand, is hopelessly distanced by the panting dragon of steam. Even the rustic maid is not to be tempted out of her hard-earned shillings, now-a-days, by the glib tongue and glittering gewgaws of the pedlar. Phillis has too often been an excursionist not to know the metropolitan price of tawdry ribbons and mock jewelry. Cbloe's penny journal keeps her well informed as to the value of gown-pieces. As the hawker vainly spreads his lure in sight of these incredulous customers he regrets the sweet simplicity of an earlier generation, and feels himself an anachronism. This is, after all, rather hard on Shakespeare's packman. The poor knave had, after all, some serviceable qualities. A little more education would have made him invaluable as the pushing traveller of some enterprising firm, resolute to take by storm the pockets of the public. Yet a trifling addition of intellectual polish, and Autolycus Smoothly, Esquire, secretary to the Universal Trust Finance Company (Limited), would be worth his weight in gold at cooking the accounts and restoring confidence to growling shareholders. But mere coarse, downright lying, un-

backed by print and paper, and not bolstered up by columns of statistics and imposing lists of directors, is no longer the powerful engine that it once was.

The seller's vantage-ground is, of course, his perfect knowledge of the value of the goods he deals in, and of the lowest margin of possible profit. The buyer, unless an expert, is conveniently ignorant on these points. Few men, not being themselves tailors, can order a coat with any certain knowledge of the quantity of cloth which goes to the making of it, the value of the materials, or the workmen's hire. Even the sharpest-eyed materfamilias is felt by the butcher to be helpless in his hands, as Mr. Silverside discourses of foot-and-mouth disease, and the necessary dearthness of prime joints. This groping in the dark on the part of a customer often brings with it a sense of injury that may be wholly unfounded. Perhaps no one ever yet bought a horse from a dealer without an uneasy suspicion of having been somehow imposed upon. And yet this sentiment, in a minor degree, is every day a vexation and a familiar demon to thousands of prudent housekeepers.

The strong part of the customer's position is his liberty of action. He has what in old sea fights used to be called the weather-gauge, and can bear down to close quarters, or keep clear of an adversary, at pleasure. Pursuing the simile, a buyer can simply give a wide berth to any establishment too dear or too bad for him, and can carry his cash and his custom elsewhere. If paterfamilias grumbles too seriously over the weekly bills, the partner of his joys may at last grow tired of pompous old Silverside's elaborate explanations as to the costly character of his meat, and may order in cheaper beef and mutton from the shop round the corner. Competition is the natural corrective of high charges, and it is equally natural that it should be a hateful thing and sore stumbling-block to those who are in haste to grow rich. In the good old days of legal monopolies the case lay nicely in a nutshell. Whoever had need, in the words of the royal proclamation, of this or that, had to betake himself to a licensed dealer, and the licensed dealers divided the profits pretty amicably between them.

Authoritative restrictions on the freedom of sale having passed away to the limbo of racks and thumb-screws, it would at first sight seem as if the clashing and jostling of individual interests would impart a healthy movement to the life-blood of trade.

It does so, but not without occasional signs of congestion. A partial and qualified monopoly is very apt to spring into an unwholesome existence. Those who have commodities—no matter of what sort—to sell, have a much keener and more vital interest in keeping up the prices of their wares than any isolated consumer can have in beating them down. We buy once from a tradesman who supplies hundreds besides ourselves. The passing twinge which an apparent overcharge causes to the individual buyer cannot easily become a motive to sustained exertion, whereas the seller's balance-sheet depends upon the toll taken, so to speak, from the pockets of all comers. Redress, from the customer's point of view, is hard to be obtained. Those who do not suffer under a plethora of spare time and spare cash can seldom afford to lay in stores at wholesale prices. And the simple remedy of exchanging one purveyor for another is not always efficacious. In quiet neighbourhoods and outlying districts, at any rate, a dead level of average prices is soon tacitly agreed to. There is a class opinion among grocers and fishmongers, as elsewhere, and to undersell one's compeers of the scoop and steelyard is to be unpopular. Now and then some false brother of ample means and combative character startles a district by painting his name over half a dozen shop-fronts, and attracts custom by his miraculous cheapness. But the benevolent innovator is only a monopolist in disguise, and will prove no whit easier to deal with than are his groaning rivals, when once the frigate of his rising fortunes shall have swamped every poor little cock-boat in his own line of business.

That co-operative stores should have succeeded so well, or that their victory should have elicited such outcries from shrieking middlemen, from whose tills they diverted a very Pactolus, is not surprising. The real wonder is that they should ever have sprung into being, armed at all points, veritable commercial Minervas, ready for action. But they have only been organised where a number of long-headed workmen, like the Rochdale Pioneers, or of educated men, with common interests and a habit of association, like the members of the Civil Service, have been found to club their brains and their purses for the remunerative enterprise. It is utopian to suppose the principle can become one of universal application. The groans of the British grocer by no means prelude his being improved off the surface of society. Ordinary buyers have no cohesion, no bond of union,

such as prevails among intelligent fellow-workers. A crowd cannot be expected to emulate the steady march and dexterous evolutions of a disciplined army, and there are a hundred influences at work to limit the extension of joint-stock store-keeping. Are there not ignorant customers, credulous customers, customers too deep already in the books of the tradesman, like so many flies in treacle, to struggle out and be free; lazy customers, who prefer a shop that is near, though it be dear, customers who resent the lack of obsequious attention, who dislike parting with ready money, and are furious that they cannot have their purchases sent home for them in the old way? Here are consolations, at any rate, for the hereditary providers of the public.

Free trade is, of course, for the general good, but then it is equally true that monopoly is the royal road to safe and selfish money-making. The temptation to suppress competition is to some minds all but irresistible. If native competition is allowed, then, at any rate, the foreigner can be shut out. Failing prohibitive laws and heavy duties, other resources remain, of which the simplest is to buy up all the available stock of some commodity, and to raise its price. This is the oldest and plainest of the legitimate means of what is technically known as rigging the market. Thus it was that Joseph, vizier of the Pharaoh of Egypt, bought for bread in the day of dearth the lands and liberties of a nation. Thus did Roman proconsuls drain the wealth from subject provinces. Louis the Fifteenth was accused of doing what his farmers-general and speculative capitalists undoubtedly did, and of using the public money to fill his granaries with corn, which his command of cash and information enabled him to buy cheap and sell dear. It is not now possible, except in Persia or the Barbary States, for prince, or satrap, or mighty merchant, to get into his own hands the great staple of the national food. But much of the unpopularity of the Jews in Eastern and Central Europe is founded on the minor operations of this nature, which their keen foresight and ready money enable them to carry out. Forage and horses are the great objects of these "forestallings and regratings," as our English parliament, which passed so many Acts against forestallers and regraters, chiefly Christian, used to style them. So sure as rumours of war are afloat, and the sensitive barometer of the funds oscillating in feverish suspense, mounts for the cavalry of the rival nations are in high demand.

But Isaac, and Samuel, and Benjamin, like eagles of commerce as they are, have scented the carrion of profit afar off, and while the Circumlocution Offices were reporting and deliberating, they had swept up every purchasable horse fit to carry a trooper or to draw a tumbrel, every haystack easy to buy, every attainable sack of oats—nay, if the hoards of the kindred money-changers are but enough, every ox or hog disposable in Hungary or Luxembourg.

To buy up nutmegs, to become master of all the cinnamon, or to be the proud possessor of all the saltpetre in the world, is, for a rich man, to become richer. He is but caliph for a day, after all, and makes but a mild use of his ephemeral sovereignty. One wide-spread tax, of small individual incidence, he levies, and then makes haste to rid himself of an empire, to win which he has emptied his exchequer and strained his credit. There are other ways of securing a heavy purse, not seldom at the expense of a conscience that, in the hour of death or sickness, is heavy too. It is more profitable to deal with the poor than with the well-to-do, as others than the railway companies, whose mainstay are the pence and shillings of that third-class passenger, for whom they do so little, have discovered. Ignorance, grinding need, and the pressure of circumstances, force the poor to pay proportionately more for rent and sustenance than the rich do; and what applies to the denizens of London courts and alleys is equally cogent as refers to the untalented millions of distant countries.

Casuists have quarrelled over the lawfulness of such dealings with savages as have in all ages been common. It has been hotly disputed whether it be right to exchange a string of glass beads for a handful of gold-dust, to weigh red cloth against pearls, to buy an estate for a gross of bright buttons, to barter Birmingham cutlery for rubies, and Manchester cottons for ostrich feathers or costly furs. Perhaps the apologists of the early discoverers had, in their rough way, logically the best of the argument. It was no part of an explorer's duty to explain to the wild men with whom he chattered what was the exact cost price of the two-pennyworth of shining trumpery for which they eagerly gave their choicest valuables. If iron seemed to the wandering natives of the Society Islands a precious metal, more tempting than were the yellow stones of El Dorado to the Spaniard, it was excusable in fore-castle Jack, or in Mr. Thrift, the ship's purser, to make the best

bargain possible for the nails and tools that commanded such a sale. It might even be hinted that a blanket was worth more to some poor Indian than the beaver-skins or scales of coarse gold which he offered in return for it, and that if an unsophisticated islander liked hawks' bells and cut glass better than coral and spice, and tortoiseshell and ambergris, it was a pity to balk his inclination. Yet the ugly fact remained that it was precisely because the savage knew no better that the bargains struck with him were so gainful to the earliest of his European visitors.

Out of Africa there either remain no savages who have much to sell, or the relics of the aboriginal races have grown shy and wary, and insist on hard dollars in lieu of the old system of barter. But African trade goes on still in the old style. The ivory merchants of the eastern portion of the continent pay their way in cloth and gunpowder and hardware. Brass wire supplies them with small change, and with this they unite a brisk traffic in beads, both pink and green, in hand-mirrors, needles, and brass buttons, and the small cowries of the sea-shore, which are to the negro what kreutzers are to the Bavarian. There is in Africa one other circulating medium—slaves, and the traders in ivory not infrequently do a little business in that variety of commerce also. The profits of even fair trading are very great in a country where the cheapest goods of Europe are thought an equivalent for massive elephant's tusks, for ostrich feathers, gold-dust, and such skins of wild beasts as the timid natives can contrive to bring in. Whole tribes will busy themselves to dig pitfalls, to prepare snares and poisoned arrows, to provide the hundred-weights of ivory, the rhinoceros hides and leopard furs, for which the Arab merchants will pay in Lancashire long-cloths, in Birmingham toys, and in such gunpowder as is in England thought good enough for scaring crows, and in Africa for shooting men. But if Abou Ghosh of Egypt, and Hajji Mehmet of Muscat, realise one, two, or three thousand per cent on their absolute bargains, there is a debit as well as a credit side to the ledgers of these not over-scrupulous believers. Their contingent expenses are enormous. Their men—and no sane trader would push his way into the interior without the protection of an armed party of his fellow-countrymen—must be highly paid. His goods must generally be carried on the backs of hired negro porters, and these have an awkward trick of desert-

ing him in the bush, while the provisions for the whole camp, during the slow African travel and the many enforced halts, swell the estimates considerably. All is not gold that glitters, even to Abon and Mehmet, in their equatorial bivouacs.

The other side of Africa, the dreaded west coast, was long a favourite region with speculative ship-owners of Bristol and Liverpool. Guinea has a wealthy sound, and the Gold Coast, the Ivory Coast, and the Slave Coast, as we see their names marked in old maps, had each their votaries. No very great quantity of the sparkling yellow grains, washed by negroes from the sands of the mountain streams, ever came to Europe, and palm-oil, and ground-nuts, and the black monkey-skins, of which muffs are made, yield a larger value of exports than either gold or ivory. The western tribes are too distracted by chronic war for inland commerce to thrive, and it is far, very far, from the muddy outlets of the Brass and Bonny rivers to the green stretches of rolling forests where the elephant herds range in numbers not yet seriously thinned. But, although the black dwellers by the sea are more keenly alive to the value of coin than were their great-grandfathers, some money is still made, in a quiet way, along the coast. Condemned muskets, damaged powder, scarlet cloth, looking-glasses, knives, beads, buttons, still rule high. Rum is in eager demand. Gaudy kerchiefs, glaring shawls, prints of violent colour and design, are yet in request at the courts of sable kings. Formerly a gun would buy a man, and that sentient chattel, being shipped and landed at Cuba, brought in from three to six hundred dollars as an average. There are yellow old brokers and supercargoes, living in rickety little stores near the tidal mud of those fever-haunted rivers on whose banks so many brave seamen lie buried, who sigh over what they call the good old days of permitted slave-dealing, when a gun could do this. And what a gun it was! Made, probably, at a total cost of from eighteen to twenty-four shillings, expressly for the African trade, and not unlikely to burst before it had fired a score of shots.

It is not only for negro use that articles are, like the famous razors which the London street hawker disposed of to the credulous countryman, made to sell. A woollen-draper must be pretty well assured that much of the cloth which he vends, and in the fabric of which new wool is sparingly mixed with the tortured fragments of old garments, is certainly not

made to wear. Shoddy is a term of elastic meaning, and its principle is by no means confined to the ingenious manufacturers who labour assiduously to transmute old into new. The houses which sanguine builders, in their own phrase, run up, with their green timber, frail roofs, tremulous floors, and walls of portentous thinness, were built to sell, to let, to mortgage, but not exactly to live in. But plate-glass windows, brightly painted doors, and an innocent-looking front of spotless stucco, suffice to blind a hurried and easily led generation to the imperfections of Lum-bago-terrace. Whatever may be thought of the wisdom of our ancestors, they did, at least, contrive to get a house built so that it should last, whereas whole squares and crescents of the whitened sepulchres of our own time must before many years become as Tadmors in the brick and mortar wilderness.

Sometimes what was originally good has passed away, and but the outer husk remains, the shell without the oyster, or rather with a pseudo-mollusk lurking within the treacherous bivalve. There is no mistake about the merits of Maltby's bitter beer, when we can get it. The other far-famed firm, Hopper and Company, whose vats and tall chimneys are at Beerborough-on-Brent, even as those of Maltby are, send forth a pale ale of excellent virtues. Unhappily, the world-renowned trade-marks of these well-known brewers do not always protect their thirsty patrons from imbibing what is not nice, and may not be wholesome. The concoctors of the amber liquor have done what they could. There are their genuine labels on the outside of that glass impostor, the bottle. We see, and are pacified by seeing, the famous yellow crescent of one house, the celebrated red star that is the cognisance of the other. There is even a legend or inscription, giving us the name and address of the privileged wight who reverently drew the pure ale from the cask, and consigned it to the bottle. But, alas! it too often happens that the frothing liquid within was never at Beerborough at all, and has no right to claim cousinship with the clear waters of the Brent. The bottle has been sold and resold, emptied and refilled, who knows how often. It may be months since some one sipped the real Beerborough nectar that it once imprisoned, for see, the label, through much handling, is ragged and dim, and the drink that mantles in our glass is but the blood of a very inferior John Barleycorn.

It may be a traditionary precaution, some lingering sentiment of the old high-handed days when men hid their gold and buried their savings for fear of robber and free lance, of the king's request for a benevolence, and the abbot's plea for altar dues, but it is certain that no retail dealer will confess to making a profit. This reluctance to own to a thriving state of affairs is pushed to exaggeration in those continental towns where the most manifestly prosperous tradesmen do not scruple to assure the travelling Briton that the few odd sous or groschen which he feebly tries to knock off the price of what he buys, represent the seller's whole benefit by the transaction. And yet it is to the large shop, with its long range of huge windows, and its sumptuous trophies of goods, that even humble and needy purchasers feel themselves drawn as by a magnet. It has been well remarked that if an intending buyer sallied forth to make the modest acquisition of a single egg, he or she would pass the stall where one egg lay in the vender's moss-lined basket, timidly murmuring, as it were, "Come, cook me," and would go on to yonder booth where there are eggs in chests, eggs in hampers, eggs ranged like grape-shot on napkin-covered boards, the stock-in-trade of a Croesus among egg merchants. And yet the customer would still want but one egg from all this abundance.

Old-established shops, well situated and well known, have a certain advantage over newer and more brilliant rivals of which their owners are still better aware than are those who deal there. It will be as well if the old-established shop supplies wares of reasonably good quality, though even that is not compulsory. An establishment which was once noted for real merits may go on undeservingly for a long time before it has quite tired out the patience of the public. Much depends, no doubt, on the character and the deportment of the old-established shopkeeper himself. He should sell dear, that is his sheet-anchor, for the connexion between what is cheap and what is nasty is so deeply rooted in some minds that they are prone to draw the illogical inference that what is expensive must be good of its kind. The Old-Established himself should be worthy of his emporium. An imposing presence, a grand air, are not given to all, but much may be done by cultivating a certain confident pomposity. A slow, weighty, self-assertive habit of speech, a disdainful manner, go a long way with some clients, and especially with mater-

families and her daughters. It is no bad plan to speak and look as if, on the whole, the Old-Established would decidedly prefer to get rid of his customer, and it often abashes the meek, and makes them feel as if it were a sort of favour to be allowed to pay somewhat more than the apstart ten doors off would charge for the same goods.

One uncomfortable effect of the rise and fall of prices remains to be mentioned. Each time that an article in general demand is brusquely raised or lowered as to its cost is apt to produce a singular and often permanent inferiority in its quality. The silkworm disease increased the cost of silk, and the cotton famine that of cotton, fairly enough; but silken fabrics unmixed with a large proportion of baser materials, and cotton of the ancient solidity, yearly grow rarer, while the prices show no inclination to decline. Tea was never so cheap as now, but it is all but impossible to buy at any cost the dainty well-tasted leaf of which our grandmothers made the infusion. Wine has been cheapened till it seems within reach of the poorest, but the generous grape juice is supplemented by foreign matters of every kind, from potato-spirit to essence of fruit, and bottles grow smaller by degrees and more beautifully diminutive with every decade, until, as we grow puzzled between reputed pints and slender flasks of somewhat larger dimensions, very thick at the bottom and very slim of neck, we read with wonder that our forefathers of a hundred years since could buy a genuine bottle of port wine for a shilling, of claret for eighteen-pence, and that each bottle held a fair and honest quart.

A LESSON.

I SAID, my life is a beautiful thing,
I will crown me with its flowers,
I will sing of its glory all day long,
For my harp is young, and sweet, and strong,
And the passionate power in my song
Shall thrill all the golden hours.

And over the sand and over the stone,
For ever and ever the waves rolled on.

I said, my life is a terrible thing,
All ruined, and lost, and crushed.
I will heap its ashes upon my head,
I will wail for my joy and my darling dead,
Till the dreary dirge for the days that are fled
Stirs faint through the dull dumb dust.

And over the sand and over the stone,
For ever and ever the waves rolled on.

I said, I was proud in my hour of mirth,
And mad in my first despair.
Now, I know nor earth, nor sky, nor sea,
Has heed or helping for one like me,
The doom or the boon comes, let it be.
For us, we can but bear.

And over the sand and over the stone,
For ever and ever the waves rolled on.

And I thought they sang, "We laugh to the sun;
 We shimmer to moon or star;
 We foam to the lash of the furious blast;
 We rage, when the rain falls, fierce and fast;
 But we do our day's work, and at last,
 We sweep o'er the harbour-bar."
 And I learnt my lesson mid sand and stone,
 As ever and ever the waves rolled on.

A SUMMER CAMP ON A NEW ENGLAND LAKE.

It is now some years ago that the writer, with a party of friends, spent the "heated term" of an American summer in an obscure little village high up among the mountains of Vermont, where nothing but a grand depth of broad, luminous, buoyant space hindered us of the heaven above us, and it seemed as if all the kingdoms of this world lay spread at our feet.

We lived almost wholly out of doors, in waggon and saddle, exploring forests, ravines, and all manner of mountain jaggednesses; tracking streams; saturating ourselves with sunshine, stretched whole days long on the short, sweet herbage of some solitary hillside, so that the ancient farm-house where we were supposed to be staying came to have for us the uses of the house in the Australian bush to Kalingalunga, only "good to sleep on the lee-side of." Seeing us for ever abroad, wandering over hill and dale as if possessed by a nature-famine unappeased and unappeasable, all about the country-side one and another began to say to us: "Oh, you ought to see Mr. V.'s camp at Lake Minoosac. That ought, by all accounts, to be the very thing to suit you; all woods an' water, an' nothin' else. Seen his gals drivin' through the village sometimes, hain't ye? Wear flannel dresses made short, like yourn, and drive a pair o' Kanuck ponies. Pooty nigh as black as squaws the gals be, for they're mostly either on their lake or in it the whole summer through. I hear their camp is a gret curiosity, and that Mr. V. is as proud on't as if he wasn't wuth a half-million, and had to get his livin' a-buildin' log-houses. You'd oughter see it, that's a fact."

Inquiries concerning this camp elicited further hearsay knowledge that gave us a really eager desire to behold the little settlement in the "forest primeval," only a dozen or fifteen miles away.

We were told that Mr. V. was a wealthy manufacturer in one of the largest towns of the state; that he had bought this lake, from which flowed the stream that turned

his mills, that he might control the water-power; that he had an encampment on the shore of the lake that was regarded as a sort of show by the whole country round; and that in this camp he and his family spent two or three months of every summer in very primitive but jolly fashion.

Also, that he was a "dreadful polite" man, making all his visitors most heartily welcome. More trustworthy information was of the same tenor, and we were assured that if we wished to inspect this bit of sylvan life our visit would certainly not be considered an impertinence.

Finally, one crisp morning in September, we started for Lake Minoosac, taking with us, as pilot and undaunted spokeswoman, our landlady of the farm-house, an elderly spinster of very majestic bearing. We filled two strong waggons, drawn by horses with no nonsense about them; and if ever strength and freedom from skittishness were desirable, they were for the last half-dozen miles of our drive. We had then left the region where farming was possible, and were up among crags and black evergreen forests, traversing mountain morasses, jolting over a ruinous corduroy road, often for a long way quite under water. At last we reached a saw-mill a mile from the lake. Here we must leave our horses, and follow, on foot, a path through the woods to the shore. The encampment was on the other side of the lake, and there was no way of reaching it practicable for our party save by boat. We should find a horn hanging on a tree at the right hand where the path debouched on the lake's edge. We were to blow this horn lustily, then wait until Mr. V. should send boats across for his unknown guests.

We found the lake, the tree, and the horn thereon. We blew the horn, and when our summons was echoed and re-echoed round the lake we seemed to ourselves such utter barbarians that we would have liked to run away before any boat should appear. But our generalissima landlady knew the ways of the camp, and had no nonsense about her either. So we stopped, and by-and-bye two specks came dancing in sight far out on the silver rippleless mirror, and these grew and grew till we could discern that one roomy boat was rowed by a stalwart young Canadian, and that the other, a dainty skiff, contained an elderly gentleman, with a bare-headed, dusky half-breed girl of eleven or twelve plying the oars.

The gentleman was, of course, Mr. V., and he came on shore to welcome us and

get an idea of our quality. He was a stout man, with beautiful grey hair lying in loose rings about his neck, in the shade of a huge sombrero; a face pale but for its sunburn, and lighted up with brilliant blue eyes, keen, yet beaming with humour and kindness. Our spokeswoman explained that we were boarders at her house, and so enchanted with the whole region round about that we proposed fitting up, for use in succeeding summers, a rustic retreat of our own, and that we desired, if we might so far trespass on Mr. V.'s kindness, to see his encampment, that we might better understand the needs and manner of a genuine woods life.

In two minutes we were placed wholly at ease. "Intrusion? Not a bit of it. People of the right sort couldn't intrude, and he was wishing this morning some one would look him up, for his family were away for a week, and he was lonely enough. Our faces were passport enough, and he should be glad to help any one to a knowledge of a healthful, rational, delightful way of spending the summer holiday. And what's the last news from Sherman? You'll see he'll be at the Gulf in a week! And now for the boats."

We were soon stowed away, but just as we had pushed off from shore another party of visitors came in sight up the pathway, and these shouted to stop the boats. Mr. V. ordered his skiff to be stopped, assured the new-comers that no more could be taken by the boats this trip, but that they should be sent for so soon as we had reached the other side.

The lake was three miles broad; the shores a wilderness. While we crossed, Mr. V. told the two or three whom he had taken into his own boat how he first came to think of this kind of summer outing.

"I bought this lake," he said, "that I might have the right to build a dam at the outlet, and so save myself from having my mills stopped, and men idle five or six weeks every summer. There had first to be a road cut through to the river from the turnpike south of us before the dam could be touched. I came up myself to oversee the work, found the lake full of fish, and was so much better in health after three or four weeks roughing it in a shanty, that I said to myself, 'No Saratoga for my wife and girls this year; no fishing in the Raquette or Saranac for me.' I made the men build a landing-pier, a bath-house, and what I think you'll say is the handsomest log-house you've ever seen. The

girls took to my notion at once, and were wild to come; but my wife was so ill that we brought her on a bed, and by very short stages. She got better directly, however, put on a flannel gymnastic suit like her girls, learned to fish and to row, is only under a roof at night or when it rains, and to-day looks, and is, ten years younger than the first summer she came up here. Since then we have done a good deal about the camp. We have a log stable now for a pair of tough Canadian ponies, and we can entertain forty people for a week, giving them lake trout and mountain strawberries or raspberries every day, and all of them good beds under cover. We contrive to amuse ourselves, too, so that there is always mourning when the order comes to break up camp. We take care of ourselves, mostly, for we only bring up the house-keeper, this little girl rowing us, and a man to look after the horses and boats. I fish, and do the heavy carpentering; my wife and daughters have cleared up the wood, and put in fancy touches for an acre round the camp. The girls have learned to shoot and swim; they have their friends here; they make excursions with the ponies for twenty miles round; things move pretty lively, in short."

Gay enough the encampment looked as we drew near and nearer it. The ground rose gently from the water's edge, and perhaps twenty rods up the slope stood the log-house, with a dozen or more snowy tents scattered about it. On its northern side a noisy brook sprang from a rocky ravine into the lake, the rock at the ravine's mouth running out and up into a bold little promontory, amid whose crags a hemlock, two or three cedars, and a tall birch, found footing and sustenance. The white bole of the birch and its tremulous foliage, already a pale gold, stood out against the evergreens. On one of the black, shaggy cedars a Virginia-creeper hung itself about in pale pink and crimson masses; and high above this bit of lovely grouping and colouring a tall flag-staff rose, from which the stars and stripes floated lazily in the soft air.

Quite a little flotilla of boats lay around the pier. There was a fish box, and a clever contrivance for keeping milk and butter cool.

The log-house was indeed very beautiful. It was built of straight, smooth logs, neatly joined, with no interstices to be filled by mud or mortar. The ends of the logs were fantastically cut and toothed; the gables,

the window-caps, and ledges, had a rustic decoration of gnarled, knotted branches and roots; and a piazza ran along the whole front, whose pillars were of unbarked red cedars, and whose floor was of bits of branches closely arranged in a pattern that nowhere repeated itself, like Chinese straw-work. Variations of the same tasteful handicraft were to be seen in the benches and seats scattered about; in a table, whose top was a mosaic of twigs, with a many-pronged pedestal of twisted roots. Brackets of hardened fungi, beautifully freaked and striped, supported baskets and vases of bark and osier, in which ferns, red-berried dwarf cornel, and partridge-berry vines, and pale orchids, were growing.

The house had one large living-room. "This is our rainy-day retreat," explained our cheerful host. "You see we all have our diversions." These were an open deal case filled with books and papers, a flute and violin, cards and chess, a work-table with a pretty litter of birch-bark embroidery—this last done with beads, coloured quills, straws, and feathers—and a long work-bench, where all sorts of fairy carpentry seemed to be carried on. The materials were piled upon it—contorted branches and roots—and our host pulled out drawers to show us more delicate treasures—twigs covered with lichens and pendent mosses, oak-balls, clusters of seeds and dried berries, packets of golden wheat, oats, millet, nodding grasses, tame and wild birds' nests, feathers, and eggs, pressed ferns and mosses, rolls of bark, red and grey cup-moss, all manner of cones, and bud-roughened spruce twigs. On a shelf above the bench were ranged bits of artistic work in varying stages of completion—a tiny flower-stand, brackets and photograph easels, wall-baskets, and some odd carven root faces and figures. The implements were simple—some dainty pincers and hammers, fine wire and copper nails, a watch-spring saw and a glue-pot, for the girls' use; some rougher tools for Mr. V. "I can hardly tell you," he said, "the recreation and delight we take at this bench, and in the picking up of our materials. We bring back something from every stroll, and are always finding out beautiful things, and contriving to adapt them to our purposes. It has been a constant training of eye, hand, and heart, and as good for us elders as for the young ones.

"It has been good for others, too, for we scatter our works pretty well. Indeed,

most of our Christmas presents to town friends are hammered, joined, glued, and carved in the summers here. They are greatly admired, and people begin to imitate them and contrive clever designs of their own. And it's curious how the simple people round about here, the coal-burners and lumber-men, collect odds and ends for us.

"It's their own notion. Every year one brings some queer root, another a fungus, or fossil, or mineral, and the small farmer who supplies us with milk has taken to chair and table-making, and threatens to beat me hollow. I live in hopes that some day education'll be more sensibly conducted, and people be taught to use their eyes, and find out the wonders and glories lying unnoticed all round us.

"Why, when I was a boy it was a little reading and writing, a great deal of spelling and figures, geography that never got beyond the dullest statistics, and a little philosophy and chemistry as dry as sawdust, and as valuable—for deadening purposes. I wanted to know about the clouds, the grasses, why the leaves changed colour in autumn; I watched the ants, bees, birds, tadpoles, and caddis-worms; I pestered with questions about what nobody knew or cared anything till I promise you my own father thought me a half-sawny for years, and died, I believe, wondering still how it was that I had turned out a tolerably practical, successful business man. If he can look in on me here he certainly finds me clean daft now!

"I see you're looking at our cook-stove," he went on presently; "that stove has a smack of civilisation that I'm rather ashamed of. You see we have the open fireplace, too, and there are two or three gipsy-kettle arrangements round outside. But my wife insisted on the stove. Like a true Yankee, she wanted her warm bread and pancakes for breakfast, and can't take to ash-cakes and johnny-cakes baked on a board before the fire. I tell her it's out of all keeping here, but she declares anything's better than smoky food, and we all eat as if we agreed with her."

A little sleeping-room out of the living-room was fitted up with rude bunks of deal, one above the other, but looking very comfortable with their piles of deer-skins, and the floor was warmly carpeted with skins also. The walls of both rooms were lined with birch-bark, and dotted with many ingenious contrivances for supporting household articles with economy of

space. Everything was of the simplest—delf, tin, deal. "I laid down the law at first," said Mr. V., "that there was to be no carting one way and another of great trains of impedimenta. All the bought household gear is so inexpensive that it is no temptation to any one if left. The house has been broken into once or twice in winter, but only by some night or storm overtaken hunters, and they did no damage beyond forcing an entrance.

"We bring only commissariat stores, a little house-linen, books, musical instruments, and a ridiculously small wardrobe. The women have each what they call a 'decent' suit, which is for railway journeying part of the way to and from home. Here they need only two or three flannel suits, full trousers, you know, with short skirts and blouses—like your own dress. It's the only costume fit for these woods, and pretty, too, to my fancy, when it's in strong fine colours. We've had several 'high jinks' here—a strawberry party, and one ball with the whole M. band here. All our own folks wore their woods' suits, and the draggling petticoats on our town guests were just ludicrous. My wife has a special dispensation to bring silver forks, and a feather-pillow, and china cup and saucer for herself. But that's the extreme limit of luxuries."

A large tent near the house was the dining-tent. It was thickly carpeted with juniper twigs, and furnished with long table and benches made of thick planks sawn from unbarked logs. The chandelier owed a little more to art, but was neither gorgeous enough to shame the rustic symposium, nor weighty enough to endanger its slender support. It was only tin—a pyramid of slender hoops set with simplest sockets, the lowest round embellished with a dangling fringe of Christmas tree ornaments in tinfoil.

The other tents were sleeping-tents. These were carpeted with sheets of birch-bark. The bedsteads were made of saplings firmly bound together with withes; the beds and pillows were sacks filled with hay or dry moss. The remaining arrangements were as Spartan: a miniature looking-glass, a deal box standing on end for washstand, a tin wash-basin and can, a great clam-shell for soap, a few pegs, a bit of log by way of stool.

The bath-house was close at hand, a roofless log-house built just above the dam, the water running incessantly through the plunge. The dressing-room portion was

quite luxurious in its accommodations and joiner's-work, and had an adjustable awning for rainy weather.

Then we wandered about the clearing. There was the spring where the bright water bubbled up in a pebble-lined basin amid the mossy roots of a huge tree. The surplus water trickled away in no distinct channel, but spread itself over several yards of depressed ground at one side, making a little swamp where marsh-marigold, mint, ladies' ear-drop, and white hellebore grew. In the centre of this a cluster of great tree-stumps and their roots made a little island, which had been converted into a fernery, and was waving now with ferns so rich and green they must surely have forgotten they ever grew anywhere else. There was moss underfoot; mossy couches and seats devised here and there; steps by which to mount into some comfortable perch in a tree's elbow; a tan-strewn croquet-ground; an Indian hammock slung ("My pew on Sundays," said Mr. V.); the establishments of two or three forest pets, and a bower coaxed out of a tangle of fox-grape, spice-bush, and virgin's bower clematis—the latter then silvered over with the curling hair of the clusters of bearded seeds.

A great tree had been felled so that in its descent it should span the ravine through which the brook flowed, and from this difficult, dizzy bridge one got views of the lake, and up the winding chasm, till all outlines were lost in the green blackness of the wood, that were worth no little scrambling and fear.

We were made free of everything, and after we had inspected all, had baths of water and sunshine in the roofless bath-house; and then dined from out our baskets, sitting on the dam, the baby stream darting away beneath us toward a career in the great world beyond the silence of these woods and circumscribing hills. Afterwards our host rowed us out into the lake, where he fished while our artist roughly sketched the encampment.

The other party of visitors had been duly brought across the lake, and they had so entirely taken possession of the place that it was a great relief to Mr. V. and to ourselves to have the long reach of shining water between us and the ignorant chatter of the new-comers. They were illiterate, untravelled country folk, harmless enough in intention, but unendurable in effect.

Mr. V. had taken no notice of them further than telling them when they landed

that if they liked to wander about the ground, they were free to do so; but they went everywhere, peeped into everything, felt everything that could be handled—behaved, in short, as if the place were a kind of rustic inn where they could do and order what they pleased, and where there was no bill to consider. They had called for milk, for lemons, they wanted fish, the little half-breed was summoned from her pretty bark embroidery to light a fire that they might make tea—there seemed no end to their wants and demands. The commanding spirit of the party was quite a young woman, in a voluminous sun-bonnet—a woman nearly six feet high, with a figure like a rail, and a voice impaired by much snuff. Her activity of mind and body was something frightful. After she had thoroughly overrun the encampment she had hovered about us, fastening upon any momentarily solitary member of the group. She imparted her impressions of Mr. V. and his manner of life with great candour. "Seems a good-natered kind o' man," she thought, "though rather down in the mouth, and not over talkative. But who could be very chirk a-livin' this way in the woods, with nothin' stirrin' in sight, only a passle of boats for company, and nothin' to do but fish and whittle out roots. Seems a curious kind o' notion, don't it? 'n leavin' a comfortable home with things like folks, 'n all. I declare I can't think o' nothin' all the time but my young ones and their playhouse, and you don't expect to see grown folks a-takin' to playhouses. And I never in all my born days saw such a lot o' rubbish gathered together. Folks in towns must be put to it to want to hang up scraggly sticks 'n toadstools on their walls." Then she would know who we were, where we came from, and what we came for. The hardened elders of our number took a little malicious pleasure in withholding from her all this information, but she pounced upon the lamb of the flock in an unguarded moment—a shy little Quaker schoolgirl, and from this defenceless victim extracted all she cared to ask. To her she confided that she thought our woods' costume very peculiar—immodest, in fact. Why we could climb round like boys, and didn't make nothin' o' showin' our ankles. She should die to wear such a dress! When this was retailed to us, and we recalled the yard or two of shapeless stocking we had several times beheld that day, in this woman's plunging about over "brake, bush, and scaur" in her conven-

tional petticoats, it was impossible to help the scream of laughter into which we all broke.

We missed her address to Mr. V., but he assured us he had never undergone so extraordinary a catechism, and that the fun of it was quite worth any annoyance he had suffered from the party. "If my women folks had been here they would have made them know at once what they could and could not do; but I can't order people, who mean no harm, out of the place, and after all there's no great harm done. They've had a good time, and so have I."

Our genial, friendly host accompanied us to the other shore when our time came to go, pressed us eagerly to return and spend a week when his wife and daughters should have come back, promising to teach us the various accomplishments of a forest life; we should have music by moonlight on the lake, we should make excursions with his girls to lovely points about. There seemed no limit to his profuse hospitality, and it was with a real heart-wrench we shook his hand over and over again, thanked him, said the last good-bye, then watched him speeding back again over the lake, his pomegranate-cheeked, dusky little serving-maiden plying the oars.

We found ourselves unable again to prove Mr. V.'s kindness, as at parting we had half hoped and promised to do, wishing to see more of himself and his family, and to be more thoroughly initiated into the secrets of wood-craft; so this day's vision was our first and last of camp and camp's owner at Lake Minoosac.

THE UMBRELLA.

AMONG the long roll of titles borne by the rulers of Ava and Pegu, who claimed relationship with all the gods of heaven and earth, was the seemingly ridiculous one of "Lord of the Twenty-four Umbrellas," a regal designation by no means so absurd as it appears, since the use of the umbrella was in ancient times confined to royal personages. As symbolical of authority as the sceptre itself, it figures among the insignia of royalty on Persepolian marbles and Assyrian bas-reliefs; more, it was the emblem of the vinous deity, too well worshipped Bacchus. Nor has it utterly fallen from its high estate yet. A Siamese writer on Siamese customs says, "If one be a prince he fares well. If one be the child of a prince, he fares well. If one be the off-

spring of the royal family, he fares well. Would such visit any one, he can. Would he walk for pleasure in any direction, he can. Would he go anywhere, he has four men to carry him on their shoulders. He has an umbrella spread over him." His Great, Glorious, and most Excellent Majesty, the King of Burmah, still sends forth his missives "to the great umbrella-bearing chiefs of the Eastern countries," and the custom-keeping monarch of Dahomey still holds his court in a sort of barn lined with a row of twenty-four umbrellas. Those on the flanks, apportioned to the officers of the amazonian guards, are white; but the central ones, marking the spot where his majesty sits, affect the gaudiest hues. Some are purple, some green, some scarlet, and a few red, blue, and yellow, like the three held over the royal hammock when it is borne into camp by its twelve female bearers. The tricoloured umbrellas are for the king's use alone, and he prides himself not a little upon their splendour. Captain Burton says, in Dahomey the umbrella forms a kind of blazonry, so that any one skilled in such heraldy can tell "the troops from the flag." When a new caboceer, or chief, is made, he receives a virgin white umbrella of palace manufacture, as the insignia of his rank, its future decorations depending upon the deeds he performs. When strangers go to court they are obliged to remove their swords and furl their umbrellas before entering the royal presence.

The umbrella was familiar enough to the eyes of the old Greeks, and Roman dames thought their establishments incomplete unless they had their due complement of umbrella-bearers, to attend them in their walks and drives, and guard their complexions from solar influences. Roman playgoers took umbrellas with them to their open theatres, the priests of the early Christian churches said mass under them, and cardinals taking their titles from Basilican churches always received an umbrella with the red hat. A golden umbrella figures in the paraphernalia of High Church dignitaries to this day; and in some places the Host is never carried through the streets without a decorated umbrella to bear it company.

Montaigne says the use of the umbrella as a protection against the parching heat of the sun was common in Italy in his time, but the prince of essayists thought the encumbrance more than counterbalanced the comfort afforded, pronouncing the umbrella to be a greater burden to

a man's arm than relief to his head. Montaigne's verdict is certainly justified by Coryate, who describes the umbrellas he saw in Italy as being made of leather, in the form of a little canopy, hooped inside with divers little wooden hoops, extending the umbrella in a pretty large compass, and having a long handle. Whether the Romans introduced the umbrella, with other devices of civilisation, to our painted ancestors, is more than we can say; the Anglo-Saxons were undoubtedly acquainted with the article, although the earliest mention of it in English literature occurs in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, in which play the hero is oddly enough compared to one. Altea, congratulating her sister-in-law upon securing the supposed easy-going fool for her husband, asks her:

Now is your heart at rest?
Now you have got a shadow, an umbrella,
To keep the world's scorching opinion
From your fair credit?

It would hardly be safe, however, to conclude that the umbrella was strange to English eyes prior to the sixteenth century, merely because earlier writers fail to mention it. Shakespeare could not tread the Globe boards without coming in contact with tobacco-smokers, and yet, if silence were good evidence, one must suppose he had never heard of the popular weed.

Florio, in his *World of Wonders* (1598), describes an "ombrella" as "a fan, a canopy; also a testern, or cloth of state for a prince; also a kind of round fan, a shadowing, that they use to ride with in summer in Italy." Philips, in his *New World of Words* (1678), gives us *umbrello*—a screen against the sun's heat, used chiefly by the Spaniards, among whom it was known by the name of *quitasole*. Shelton, the translator of *Don Quixote*, adopts another orthographical form—*umbrel*—used also by Fynes Morison, who writes, "to avoid the beams of the sun, in some places in Italy, they carry umbrels, or things like a little canopy, over their heads; but a learned physician told me that the use of them is dangerous, because they gather the heat into a pyramidal point, and thence cast it down perpendicularly upon the head." In 1656, an umbrella was sufficiently rare in England for Tradescant to think one worthy a place among the wonders of his Ark at South Lambeth. Eighteen years later umbrellas would seem to have got into society, for in Blount's *Glossographia*, *umbrello* is described as "a fashion of round and broad

fans, wherewith the Indians, and from them our great ones, preserve themselves from the heat of the sun."

The first hint of the umbrella being turned to its present purpose is given by Swift in the Tale of a Tub, written in 1696, where Jack is said to have had a way of working his parchment copy of his father's will into any shape he pleased, so that it served him for a nightcap when he went to bed, and for an umbrella in rainy weather. In 1708, Kersey speaks of it as commonly used by women to keep off the rain. In 1709, Ned Ward, sneering at the new-fangled invention, the barometer, says by its means gentlemen and ladies of the middle quality may be infallibly informed when it is right to put on their best clothes, and when they ought not to venture in the fields without their cloaks and umbrellas. Ladies do not appear, however, to have taken very kindly to the innovation, for in Swift's description of the effects of a city shower we are told:

To shops, in crowds, the draggled females fly,
Pretend to cheapen goods, but nothing buy;

although

The tucked-up seamstress walks with hasty strides,
While streams run down her oiled umbrella's sides.

Gay limits its appearance to the winter season:

Good housewives all the winter's rage despise,
Defended by the riding-hood's disguise;
Or underneath th' umbrella's oily shed,
Safe through the wet on clinking pattens tread.
Let Persian dames th' umbrella's ribs display,
To guard their beauties from the sunny ray,
Or sweating slaves support the shady load.
When Eastern monarchs show their state abroad,
Britain in winter only knows its aid
To guard from chilly showers the walking maid.

A large umbrella was usually kept hanging in the hall at good houses, to keep visitors dry as they passed to or from their carriages. Coffee-house keepers provided in the same way for their frequenters; but men disdained to carry such a convenience through the streets. In the Tatler's verses, from which we have already quoted:

The Templar spruce, while every spout's abroach,
Stays till 'tis fair, yet seems to call a coach.

He would not have been guilty of slurring his own manhood like the careful young gentleman belonging to the Custom House, who, for fear of rain, borrowed the umbrella of Will's Coffee-House from the mistress, and was formally advertised that in like need he should be welcome to the maid's pattens. It was held effeminate, indeed, to shirk a wetting. "Take that thing away," said Lord Cornwallis to the servant about to hold the house umbrella

over him. "I am not sugar or salt, to melt in a shower." The marquis would have enjoyed the scene at that Metz review, when an officer, offering his umbrella to his unprotected emperor, Joseph the Second exclaimed, "I heed not a shower; it hurts nothing of a man but his clothes." Whereupon ensued a closing movement all round. There certainly is something unsoldierly about our subject, and it is hard to imagine the Guards under fire and umbrellas at the same time. Such a thing, however, was seen once. During the action at the Mayor's House, near Bayonne, in 1813, the Grenadiers, under Colonel Tynling, occupied an unfinished redoubt near the high road. Wellington, happening to ride that way, beheld the officers of the household regiment protecting themselves from the pelting rain with their umbrellas. This was too much for the great chief's equanimity, and he sent off Lord A. Hill instantler with the message, "Lord Wellington does not approve of the use of umbrellas under fire, and cannot allow the gentlemen's sons to make themselves ridiculous in the eyes of the army." He afterwards gave the colonel a good wiggling himself, telling him, "The Guards may carry umbrellas when on duty at St. James's, but in the field it is not only ridiculous, but unmilitary." Sainte-Beuve saw nothing ridiculous in standing fire under an umbrella. When he appeared as a duellist for the first and last time in his life, the critic took his place armed with an ancient flint-lock pistol and an umbrella. His adversary protested against the gingham, the seconds remonstrated, but in vain. Sainte-Beuve declared he had no objection to being shot, but preferred to die a dry death, so the duel proceeded, until each combatant had fired four times without effect, Sainte-Beuve keeping his umbrella hoisted to the end.

Wolfe, no feather-bed soldier, did not think there was any unmanliness in keeping one's coat dry. Writing home from France, in 1752, he expressed his surprise that the Parisian fashion of using umbrellas in sunshine, and something of the same kind in wet weather, had not been adopted in England. With Wolfe's negative evidence the one way, and Swift and Gay's positive evidence the other, it is impossible to tell when the umbrella was fairly established here. Jonas Hanway has been credited with being the first man courageous enough to carry an umbrella regularly in London streets, but it is open

to doubt if he carried an umbrella at all. He is said to have defended his wig and face with a "parapluie"—and Bailey calls a "parasol," a small umbrella to keep off the rain. It was something bigger than our modern lady's sunshade, however, wherewith Shebbeare's footman shielded his master in the pillory; if the doctor had not been popular with the mob, the device would have provoked an extra share of missiles, for, twelve years later, whenever Macdonald ventured to air a fine silk umbrella he had picked up in Spain, he was saluted with "Frenchman, why don't you call a coach!"—very likely enough to be raised by the hackney-coachmen, who counted upon making hay when the sun did not shine. The apparition of a scarlet umbrella caused immense excitement in Bristol in 1780, and Southey's mother could recollect the time when the Bristolians made a point of chivvying any umbrella bearer. A Doctor Spens is said to have introduced the umbrella into Edinburgh; and a surgeon named Jameson, in 1781 or 1782, made one familiar to the eyes of the citizens of Glasgow. Forty years ago, a lady lived in Taunton, who could remember when but two umbrellas existed there; one, the property of the clergyman, being hung up in the church porch every Sunday, to be admired by the incoming congregation. They did not take such a serious view of the innovation as the worthy folks of New Haven, who were scandalised at beholding a deacon walking to church under an umbrella, and sent a deputation next day to reprove him for flying in the face of Providence, who evidently intended that man should get wet when it rained.

Umbrellas, when not on active service, used to be carried upside up, not upside down, as we carry them now, the finger being passed through a ring fixed to the top of the stick. In 1787, a tradesman in Cheapside admitted his readiness to supply the public with pocket and portable umbrellas, superior to any hitherto imported from abroad, or manufactured at home; he also guaranteed that his ordinary umbrellas were so prepared that they would not stick together, a common failing with the oiled silk articles then in vogue. Was this enterprising shopkeeper the introducer of the gingham umbrella, inseparably associated with Paul Pry, the inimitable Gamp, and the King of the French? Although banished from the best society, there is yet a sort of respectability about the gingham. "My dear fellow," said

Jerrold, to a popular actor, who was suffering from chronic pecuniary embarrassment, "I do not despair of living to see the day when you will be found, some muggy morning, walking up Ludgate-hill with a cotton umbrella under your arm, going to invest your funds in the Bank of England." Lamb's favourite comedian, Munden, was seldom seen off the stage without his gingham, a very shabby one. Meeting an old friend one morning, the latter saluted him with, "Ah, Joe, I've been thinking of you—I'm off to America!" "Are you?" said Munden, "then you must give me something in remembrance—take my umbrella and give me yours!" It is unnecessary, perhaps, to add that Joe's friend sported silk.

There was an odd row over an umbrella in 1827. The doorkeepers of the Upper House were in the habit of admitting strangers below the bar, after relieving them of their sticks or umbrellas. A Mr. Bell left his umbrella one evening, which somebody claimed and carried off; whereupon the defrauded proprietor brought an action against the doorkeepers, and served the process himself, within the precincts of the House. Lord Chancellor Eldon called the attention of the Lords to this breach of privilege, and the offender was ordered to appear at the bar. Tom Moore seized upon the incident, and indited a rhymed version of Eldon's speech:

"My Lords, on the question before us at present,
No doubt I shall hear—'Tis that cursed old fellow,
That bugbear of all that is liberal and pleasant,
Who won't let the Lords give the man his umbrella!"
"I own of our Protestant laws I am jealous,
And long as God spares me, will always maintain;
That once having taken men's rights or umbrellas,
We ne'er should consent to restore them again.
"What security have you, ye bishops and peers,
If thus you give back Mr. Bell his parapluie,
That he mayn't with his stick come about all your ears,
And then where would your Protestant periwigs be?"
"No, Heaven be my judge, were I dying to-day—
Ere I dropped in my grave, like a medal that's mellow,
'For God's sake!' at that awful moment I'd say,
'For God's sake, don't give Mr. Bell his umbrella!'"

As the question of the restoration or non-restoration of the missing umbrella was never before the House, of course Hansard contains nothing bearing the faintest resemblance to Moore's squib. Yet when the poet printed the lines, many years afterwards, in a collection of his works, he added a note for the benefit of posterity, explaining that Mr. Bell having left an umbrella behind him in the House of Lords, the doorkeepers, "standing upon the privileges of that noble body, refused to restore it, and the above speech arose

out of the transaction"—a proof how hard truth-telling is to a partisan writer.

Umbrellas share with books the peculiarity that they may be stolen with impunity, so long as the thief assumes the guise of a borrower; why this should be is an unsolvable mystery. It is just the same in America as in England, equally low notions on the subject prevailing on both sides the Atlantic. "Why buy an umbrella?" asks an American editor; "all you need do is to stand in a doorway until some one passes with an article suiting your taste, and then step out boldly, seize hold of the desired object, with 'Sir, I beg your pardon, you have my umbrella!' In nine cases out of ten it will be meekly surrendered, for how does the bearer know you are not the man he stole it from!" There are some signs that the world is growing better; we saw lately, with our own eyes, an advertisement offering to restore an umbrella, left somewhere by the forgetful owner; and a clergyman publicly declared his conviction that society was improving in morality, because he knew of three several instances of borrowed umbrellas finding their way back to the owners. But then on the other hand, we have the testimony of another clergyman that he had only married one couple in the course of a year; that they did not pay him his fee, but stayed to dine with him, as it was raining hard; and finally borrowed his umbrella when they departed—since when he has not seen or heard anything of them!

THE YELLOW FLAG.

By EDMUND YATES,

AUTHOR OF "BLACK SHEEP," "NOBODY'S FORTUNE," &c. &c.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER XI. MRS. CALVERLEY LOSES HER COMPANION.

WITHIN half an hour after Pauline's return Alice Claxton awoke to consciousness, dully and heavily at first, with dazed eyes, with a sense of oppression at her head and heart, with an impossibility to collect her thoughts, to make out where she was, or what was passing around her. Gradually this feeling of helplessness and indecision subsided. She recognised Pauline, who was bending over her, and softly bathing her forehead with eau-de-cologne, and with that recognition the flood-gates of memory were opened, and the recollection of her widowhood and her grief rushed into her mind.

In an instant Pauline saw what had

happened, one glance at the patient's face was sufficient for her practised eye.

"You must not move, dear," she whispered, leaning forward, "you must not attempt to speak until we have given you something to sustain you. You have been very ill, my poor child, and even now must on no account be subjected to any excitement. Lie still for yet a few minutes, and then I will tell you anything you want to know."

Alice did as she was bid, falling back on to the pillow from the sitting position in which she had endeavoured to raise herself, and closing her eyes, as though wearied with even that small attempt at motion. Meanwhile Pauline rang the bell, gave the servant orders to bring some jelly and other invalid food, which had been in preparation, and cast her eyes round the room to see that it was in exactly the same order as it had been when Alice was carried up to it. Everything just the same, the old desk replaced under the toilet-cover of the table, the books and papers through which Pauline had searched restored to their former position, no difference noticeable anywhere. Then Pauline seated herself by the bedside, and, taking the jelly from the servant, fed Alice with it as though she had been a child, proceeding afterwards to bathe her face and hands, to comb her dark hair from off her forehead, to shake and smooth the pillows, doing all quietly and with the gentlest touch imaginable.

"You are better now, dear," she said, when she had finished her task, and was again seated. "Your eyes are bright, and there is some sign of colour in your cheeks. You may speak now, dear, as I know you are anxious to do. You deserve some reward for your obedience."

Then Alice raised herself on her elbow, and said in a low tone, quite different from her usual clear voice, "I feel strange yet though, and not quite able to make out what has happened. Tell me," she said, "is it true about John Claxton, is he dead?"

"Yes, dear," said Pauline, "it is true."

"Ah, you were to take me to him," cried the girl, raising her voice. "I recollect it all now. Why am I here in bed? Why do we not start at once?"

"We do not start because it would be useless," said Pauline. "You do not know what has happened, my poor child. On the evening when you were to have gone to London with me, just as we were on the point of setting out, you, who had fought

so well against the excitement, gave way at last, and fell into a fainting fit."

"How long ago is that?" said Alice, putting her hand to her head.

"That is nearly three days ago," said Pauline, "and you have remained in a state of unconsciousness ever since, and——"

"And now I am too late to see him," cried Alice, wildly. "I know it by your manner, by your averted face. They cannot have buried him without my having seen him. It is not so? Oh, tell me at once."

"It would be worse than cruel to deceive you, my poor girl," said Pauline, softly. "It is so."

Then the little strength which remained to Alice Claxton gave way, and she burst into a fit of grief, burying her face in the pillow, over which her long dark hair lay streaming, clutching at the coverlet with her hands, and sobbing forth broken ejaculations of misery and despair. Pauline did not attempt to interfere with her while she was in this state, but stood by the bedside calmly compassionate, waiting until the paroxysm should be over, and the violence of Alice's grief should subside. It subsided after a time. Her head was raised from the pillow, the spasmodic action of the hands ceased, and although the tears still continued to flow, the ejaculations softened down into one oft-repeated wail, "What will become of me? What will become of me?"

Then Pauline gently touched her outstretched hand, and said, "What will become of you, my poor child, do you ask? While you have been lying here unconscious, there are others who have occupied themselves with your future."

"My future?" cried Alice. "Why should they occupy themselves with that? How can they give me back my husband?"

"They cannot indeed give you back your husband," said Pauline, quietly, "but they can see that your life altogether is less dreary and more hopeful than it otherwise would be; and it is well for you, Alice," she said, calling her for the first time by her Christian name, "that you have found such friends. You have seen one of them already, the gentleman who came here to tell you of your loss—Mr. Gurwood."

"Ah," said Alice, "I remember him, the clergyman?"

"Yes, the clergyman; he is a kind and a good man."

"Yes," said Alice, reflectively, "he was very kind and thoughtful, I recollect that, but why did they send him, he does not belong to this parish, why didn't Mr. Tom-

linson come? Is Mr. Gurwood a friend of his?"

"Not that I know of," said Pauline, who had not the least idea who Mr. Tomlinson might be. "Mr. Gurwood was—is Mr. Calverley's step-son."

"Mr. Calverley!" cried Alice, "my poor dear John's partner? Ah, then, it was quite natural he should be sent to me."

"Quite natural," said Pauline, much relieved by finding her take the explanation so easily. "Mr. Gurwood is, as I have said before, a very kind and a very good man. He will come and see you to-morrow or the next day, and tell you what he proposes you should do."

"I suppose I shall have to leave this house?" said Alice, looking round her with a sigh.

"I should think so, Alice," said Pauline.

"I should think it would be better for many reasons that you should, but I know nothing positively; Mr. Gurwood will talk to you about that when he comes. And now, dear, I must leave you for awhile. I have to go to London to make some arrangements in my own affairs, but I will return as speedily as I can. I may see Mr. Gurwood, and I shall be glad to tell him that you are almost yourself again."

"Almost myself," said Alice. "Ah, no, never myself again! never myself again!"

Meanwhile the mistress of the house in Great Walpole-street had been in anything but an enviable frame of mind. It has been observed of Mrs. Calverley, that even when she was Miss Lorraine, and during the lives of both her husbands, her favourite position was standing upon her dignity, a position which, with some persons, is remarkably difficult to maintain. Mrs. Calverley was of opinion that by the conduct both of her companion and of her son her dignity had been knocked from under her, and she had been morally upset, and that, too, at a time when she had calculated on receiving increased homage: on taking her place as acknowledged head of the household. That Madame Du Tertre should ask to be relieved from her attendance at a time when of all others she might have known that her presence would be necessary to console her friend in her affliction, and to aid her in devising schemes for the future, was in itself a scandal and a shame. But that her son Martin, who, as a clergyman of the Church of England, ought to be a pattern of filial obedience and all other virtues, should neglect his mother in the way that he did, going away to keep what

he called business appointments day after day; above all, that he should omit to give her any definite answer to the generous proposition which she had made him, was more scandalous and more shameful.

So Mrs. Calverley remained swelling with spite and indignation, all the more fierce and bitter because she had to keep them to herself, and these were the first days of her triumph, days which she had thought to spend very differently, in receiving the delicate flattery and veiled homage which she had been accustomed to from Pauline, in listening to the protestations of gratitude which she had expected from her son. Now both of these persons were absent—for Martin was so little at Great Walpole-street that his mother had small opportunity of conversation with him—and she was left in her grim solitude, but she knew sooner or later they would return, and when she did get the opportunity she was perfectly prepared to make it as uncomfortable for each of them as possible.

It was late in the afternoon, and Mrs. Calverley, who had so far given in to the fashion of the time, as to take her five o'clock tea—which was served, not with the elegant appliances now common, but in a steaming breakfast-cup on an enormous silver salver—had settled herself to the consumption of what might be called her meal, when Pauline entered the room. She came forward rapidly, and taking her patroness's hand, bent over it and raised it to her lips. Mrs. Calverley gave her hand, or rather let it be taken, with sufficiently bad grace. She sat poker-like in her stiffness, with her lips tightly compressed. It was not her business to commence the conversation, and the delay gave her longer time to reflect upon the bitter things she fully intended to say.

"So at last I am able to once more reach my dear friend's side," said Pauline, seating herself in close proximity. She saw at once the kind of reception in store for her, and though the course on which she had determined rendered her independent of Mrs. Calverley's feelings towards her, she was too good a diplomatist to provoke where provocation was unnecessary.

"You certainly have not hurried yourself to get there," said Mrs. Calverley, clipping the words out from between her lips. "I have now been left entirely to myself for—"

"Do not render me more wretched by going into the details of the time of my absence," said Pauline, "it has impressed

itself upon me with sufficient distinctness already."

"I should have thought, madame," said Mrs. Calverley, unrelentingly, "that strictly brought up as you have always represented yourself to be, you would have understood, however pleasantly your time may have been occupied, that your duty required you to be in this house."

"However pleasantly my time may have been occupied," cried Pauline; "each word that you utter is an additional stab. It is duty and duty alone which has called me away from your side. It is duty which imposes a further task upon me, cruel, heart-rending task, which I have yet to declare to you! And you, who have been a life-long martyr to the discharge of your own duty, ought to have some pity for me in the discharge of mine."

These last words were excellently chosen for her purpose. That she was a martyr, and an unrecognised martyr, was the one text on which Mrs. Calverley preached: to acknowledge her in that capacity was to pay her the greatest possible compliment. So, considerably mollified, she replied, "If I felt annoyed at your absence, Palmyre, it was for your sake more than for my own. The loss of your society is a deprivation to me, but I am accustomed to deprivations and to crosses of all kinds. I devoted myself to my husband—and had he listened to the counsel I gave him, he would be here at this moment—and I am prepared to devote myself to my son."

"Ah," said Pauline, with earnestness, "Monsieur Martin!"

"Yes, Palmyre," said Mrs. Calverley. "Monsieur Martin, as you speak of him in your foreign way, the Reverend Martin Gurwood, as he is generally called. I am prepared to devote myself to him. I have told him that I will remove him from that desolate country parish, and establish him here in London in a church of his own, that he shall live with me in this house, share my wealth, and dispense my charities."

"Martin in London," thought Pauline, to herself. "Then it is in London that Alice and I must take up our abode." Then she said aloud, "And what does Monsieur Martin say to this grand, this generous proposition, madame?"

"Ay, exactly—what does he say!" cried Mrs. Calverley. "You may well ask that! You and every one else would have thought that he would have jumped at such an offer, wouldn't you? And so he would,

doubtless, if it had come from any one else, but it is my lot to suffer!"

"He has not refused it, madame?"

"No, he has not refused; he has given me no definite answer any way."

"Ah, he will not refuse you, I am sure," said Pauline, clasping her hands; "the prospect of such a life with such a mother must overcome even his strict notions of self-denial. Ah, madame, if you could only know what a thrill of joy your words have sent through my heart, how what you have said has tended to disperse the black clouds which were gathering over me!"

"Dear me, Palmyre," cried Mrs. Calverley, in her blank, unimaginative way, "black clouds! What on earth are you talking about?"

"I told you just now that I had a yet further sacrifice to make to duty. It is a sacrifice so great, so painful to me, that I hardly dared to hint at it; but what you have said just now robs it somewhat of its sting. What a comfort it would be to me to know that you had some one to look after and cherish you, as you ought to be cherished, when I am gone."

"What's that you said, Palmyre?" cried Mrs. Calverley, sharply indeed, but nothing like so viciously as Pauline had expected. "You are gone! What do you mean by that?"

"When I am gone," repeated Pauline, "in obedience to duty which calls upon me. Ah, dear friend, why are you wealthy, and in high position, surrounded by comforts and luxury? If you were poor and needy, sick and struggling, I could reconcile it with my duty to remain here with you; as it is, I am called upon to leave you, and to devote myself to those to whom my poor services can be useful."

"You must be more explicit, Palmyre," said Mrs. Calverley, still without any trace of anger. Bold and haughty as she was, she had been somewhat disturbed at the idea of having to break to her companion the news of her dismissal, and now she thought the difficulty seemed materially lightened.

"It is a sad story," said Pauline, "but it will be interesting to you who have a benevolent heart."

"It is about your cousin, I suppose?" said Mrs. Calverley.

"My cousin?" cried Pauline.

"Yes," said Mrs. Calverley; "your cousin, who was lying ill at the poor lodging, she who knew no one in London but yourself, could not speak our language, and

was utterly helpless; she is worse, I suppose? Perhaps she is dead!"

"Tiens," said Pauline to herself, "it is lucky she reminded me about the cousin; in all the confusion and plotting I had almost forgotten what I had said. No, my dear friend," she said aloud, "my poor cousin still lives, and is, indeed, considerably easier and better than when I first went to her. A relation of hers, a brother-in-law, has found her out, and is being kind to her, as the poor are always kind to one another; not, indeed, that this brother-in-law can be called poor, except in comparison with persons of wealth like yours. He is an old friend of mine; he knew my father, the artillery officer at Lyons, and used often to come to my husband's house when we were in business there."

"He admired you then, and he has made an offer now, and you are going to be married to him?" said Mrs. Calverley, with an icy smile. "Is that it, Palmyre; is that the sacrifice you feel yourself called upon to make?"

"Ah, my friend," cried Pauline, "there is no question of anything of that sort for me; my heart is buried in grief. No, this worthy man, who has known me so long, knows that I am what you call in your language, but for which we have no word in French, respectable. He knows that I can be trusted, and he offers to me a place of trust; he asks me to undertake a sacred charge."

"Dear me," again ejaculated Mrs. Calverley; "what might that be?"

"This old friend of mine finds himself left as guardian and trustee for the widow and orphan of his former ward, a wretched young man—he must have been born under an evil star, for nothing seemed to prosper with him—and who has just died of consumption at Nice. The widow is, as I understand, a weak creature, very young, very pretty, and utterly inexperienced. Her husband during his lifetime never allowed her to do anything, and the consequence is that she is quite ignorant of the ways of the world, and would be easily snapped up by any one who might choose to take advantage of her. Being, as I have said, very pretty, and having a small competence of her own, I need scarcely tell you that there would be plenty of wretches on the look out for her."

"Wretches, indeed!" cried Mrs. Calverley. "One of the few curses of wealth is that it renders one liable to be so beset."

"My old friend," then pursued Pauline,

"a warm-hearted man, who preserves a grateful recollection of the manner in which at the outset of his life he was befriended by his dead widow's father, and desirous of shielding the widow and orphans to the best of his power, offered me a modest salary to take up my abode with this young woman, and to become her protector and look after her generally."

"Well," said Mrs. Calverley, with a sniff, "and what did you say to that?"

"I refused altogether. I told him that I was already living with one whom fortune had cruelly treated in depriving her of her only protector, and who from her resignation and goodness commanded my deepest sympathy. But my old friend refused to accept this explanation, and after questioning me closely about you and your position, pointed out that if I were doing a good action in living with you, who were wealthy and powerful, how much more rigorously should I be discharging my duty in giving myself up to those who, while equally afflicted with you in the loss of those they loved, were not endowed with your circumstances, worse than all, were not endowed with your patience and Christian resignation."

A faint flush of pleasure glowed on Mrs. Calverley's pale cheeks. "There is something in that," she said; "it was a sensible remark. My trouble has been lifelong, I have been schooled in it from my youth; but this poor person is only just beginning to know the miseries of the world. Well, Palmyre, what did you say then?"

"I felt, dear friend, that, as you say, the argument was strong, the appeal almost irresistible; but I said that I could give no definite reply; that, however strongly my duty might call me elsewhere, my heart was with you; that I would lay the case before you, exactly as it stood, and unless I had your free consent I should not separate myself from you."

Outwardly calm and composed, Mrs. Calverley was inwardly in a state of great delight. Not merely did she see her way to getting rid of her companion without any trouble, but she would receive the greatest credit for her magnanimity and self-denial in giving Pauline up to those whose need was greater than her own. It was, however, necessary that she should be cautious and reticent to the last, so before pledging herself to anything definite Mrs. Calverley said:

"You, Palmyre, who know my character so well, must be perfectly aware that the circumstances which you have narrated to me are such as would command my warmest sympathies, but before I give you any definite answer, I should like to ask you one or two questions. The little household over which you are called upon to preside will be established in France I presume?"

"No," said Pauline, "in England. The poor widow is an Englishwoman, and declines to go away with her little child, a charming little creature, from the land of her birth."

"In England?" cried Mrs. Calverley. "And whereabouts in England?"

"Nothing is yet settled," said Pauline, "but I have no doubt that I should have some hand in deciding that, and all my influence would be used to remain in the neighbourhood of London."

Mrs. Calverley was overjoyed at this announcement; she thought she saw her way to making use of her quondam ally without the necessity of recompensing her.

She was silent for a few minutes. Then she said, in a tone which she tried to modulate as much as possible, but which was unmistakably triumphant, "I have reflected, Palmyre, and I find it is again my duty to exercise that power of self-denial with which I have fortunately been imbued. These poor creatures have greater need of you than I, and however much I may suffer by the abnegation, I waive my claim upon you—I give you up to them."

"You are an angel," said Pauline, bending down to kiss her friend's hand. Her face was necessarily hidden, but if any one could have caught a glimpse of it they would have seen on it an expression of intense amusement.

"I shall see you again, I suppose?" said Mrs. Calverley.

"Oh, certainly," said Pauline; "I shall let you know as soon as anything is settled, and I sincerely trust that my duties will not be so constant and so binding as to prevent my frequently coming to visit my best and dearest friend."

"Does she take me for a fool, this woman?" said Pauline when she had gained the solitude of her bedroom, "or is she so blinded by her own folly as to believe that other people are so weak as she? However, the difficulty, such as it was, has been easily arranged, and all is now clear for me to commence my new manner of life."

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